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AUTHOR Handscombe, Jean
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ABSTRACT

The leadership component in a teacher certification course for teaching English as a second language (ESL), adapted from an administrator development course, was designed to encourage teachers to think of themselves as leaders within their present classroom roles. Techniques include such activities as introductions and the sharing of varied teaching experiences and needs. Leadership is highlighted as an everyday concern in the teachers' instructional settings. Major sources of information on ESL are identified, and strategies for influencing people, both peers and colleagues at other levels of the educational hierarchy, are examined. The need for teacher attention to the intent of communication is emphasized, as well as the need for the teacher to establish a reputation as a knowledgeable spokesperson. Practice in dealing with the anxiety of influencing others is provided through the preparation and presentation by each teacher of a workshop for a group of 35 colleagues. Experience has shown that this kind of course component gives teachers courage and skills to bring about positive changes in their own work settings, and sometimes in those of their colleagues. (MSE)

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# Who's in Charge Here?

Jean Handscombe

As a child in grade school, all I knew about Illinois was that it was somewhere around the Great Lakes. My sense of geography hasn't improved much, but I do know a lot more about the teachers who choose to live and work here--at least the ones who really matter to me, the TESOL people.

Marsha Santelli was, I think, the first person from Illinois whom I met and got to know. She and I, along with Vickie Gunther, used to pal around in Elementary Education Interest Section business meetings--there were so few of us that is wasn't too difficult to become acquainted with everyone.

Pat Rigg, Muriel Saville-Troike, Kyle Perkins, and Doug Brown I met when they came to Canada to speak at conferences. Then as I began working on the Hawaii conference, I began to realize how strong the representation was from Illinois: Paul Angelis, Lyle Bachman, Margie Berns, John and Mary Ann Boyd, Jeff Bright, Patricia Carrell, Gary Cziko, Margo Gottlieb, Else Hamayan, Guadalupe Hammersma, Braj Kachru, Lars LaBounty, Miriam Lykke, Linda Mrowicki, Charles Parish, Mary Potocki, Marguerite Vellos, and Julie Weisman. It is not too much of a surprise that I looked to Illinois, and specifically to Dick Drem, for help in organizing TESOL Toronto in '83. I've got to know through the '82 Summer Institute and Meeting Linda Schinke-Llano and Elliot Judd, through the Secondary School Newsletter David Barker and Sue Morrisroe, and through his inimitable presidency of TESOL, Joh Haskell.

Given much of a list of TESOL notables, then, you may well ask how I came here today with the question, "Who's in charge here?" But I do, because it's an important question to raise.

ESL students, by the nature of the skills they seek and their often probationary status in a country, are in a weak position to argue on their own behalf for the establishment of effective programs. They depend on members of the host society to act for them. The priority accorded to language training is not very high. ESL programs are often ad hoc additions to the curriculum, with temporary teachers rarely given full-time tenured positions. In fact, if they seek promotions, they may have to abandon the field.

ESL teachers often feel that they are in a similar position to that of their students--tongue-tied and powerless.

What to do?

Today I'd like to describe to you a leadership component in an ESL certification course which is offered in Toronto through the Faculties of Education at both universities--University of Toronto and York--which I've been involved in. It was previously designed for coordinators, program directors, leads of departments, and called "Confessions of a Consultant." The final confession was to my course director at the Faculty of Education--I had been doing it all wrong. Coordinators were not the ones who needed help in doing their

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jobs--they had lots of time to learn in the field. Being a leader was a major focus of all their activities--they were bound to attend to acquiring the necessary skills--life would be unbearable for them if they didn't!

The much more important group in terms of collective power is classroom teachers. If all of them saw themselves as leaders within their present roles --not simply in preparation for future ones--maybe that would move the whole profession into a mainstream position within education.

Let me describe more of the content of the course.

The following originally appeared in the Georgetown University Round Table 1983 Applied Linguistics and the Preparation of Second Language Teachers: Toward a Rationale , Alatis, Shean and Strevens, editors.

The Leadership Component in the Professional Development of ESL Teachers

The leadership training component to which we refer is included in a three-part, 375-hour, mostly in-service course offered to teachers in Ontario who wish to obtain certification in ESL from the Ministry of Education at "Specialist" level. The topic of leadership is covered during the third and final part, which is open only to teachers who have successfully completed the first two and have had at least one year of ESL teaching in an Ontario school, college, or university. Since specialist-level certification is not mandatory in order to teach ESL in Ontario, the very presence of these teachers in the course demonstrates a high level of commitment to their personal, if not collective, professional development. The candidates do not, however, as a rule, presently hold positions of responsibilty beyond their own ESL classroom or department, and very few could (or sad to say, would) expect to do so in the near future. The focus of the course, therefore, is upon the role that ESL classroom teachers can play in improving the effectiveness of, and/or assuring the continued existence of, the programs for which they are responsible.

The aim of the leadership component is to define a collective task--the establishment of a firm institutional base for ESL programs, with strong public and governmental support; to analyze that task in terms of the skills required by teachers who wish to contribute to these ends; and to provide practice in these skills.

The course includes a variety of topics for presentation and discussion, together with related activities. It usually begins with paired introductions, during which two teachers who are strangers are asked to introduce each other to the group, giving details of their current ESL teaching situation and their reasons for taking the course. Given the teaching situations represented in each group of 35-40 candidates, the exercise inevitably reveals the variety and richness within the field. Teachers who work within an elementary school setting are suddenly confronted with the concerns of fellow professionals who teach the parents of those children; those who spend their working days with university-bound students come into contact

with those who plan activities for students in factory settings; details of teaching experiences abroad are shared along with personal experiences of immigration, language learning, and cultural adjustment on the home front.

To these may be added examples of fruitful interaction between different teaching settings--the fact that much of the interesting work presently undertaken in ESL-literacy programs is, in fact, based on techniques developed with young children; teachers of ESL generally become excited by the potential of computer assisted instruction, which till recently was seen as the domain of teachers of high school or adult students. This type of cross-fertilization is further encouraged by suggesting that all candidates make arrangements to visit an ESL program significantly different from their own, and that they read key texts which have now become relevant to their needs for a broader perspective.

What results from this exericse is a reminder of the enormously wide range of the ESL/EFL profession, who its students are, what the purposes are for which they need English, what the settings are in which they learn, who their teachers are, and how these variables influence the selection of techniques and materials for classroom use. What also emerges is the acknowledgement that a basic qualification for a leader is his/her breadth of knowledge of the field, together with a developed skill in assessing the major components of any given setting.

What other attributes should a leader possess? The composite sketch which usually emerges, drawn from the course participant's own experience of people whose leadership skills they admire, is of a confident, clear-thinking, open-minded, energetic, persuasive, encouraging diplomat. Unappreciated are leaders who make them feel inadequate, who provide unasked for, unnecessary, or impractical advice, who are unable to provide required information on relevant sources, and who appear to be more interested in their own glory than in achieving shared goals.

Returning once more to the participants' experience by asking them to reflect on settings with which they are familiar, leadership is presented as an everyday matter, affecting all of them. It becomes a topic on which, collectively and individually, they have articulate and well-founded opinions, which in turn produce criteria against which they can measure not only the performance of those presently in leadership positions, but also their own.

All this is followed by input: information regarding matters such as immigration, newcommer settlement, provision of language teaching and orientation programs, and other legislation affecting ESL students; details as to which agencies, government departments, and institutions are the prime deliverers of services and what means they use to advertise these; finding financial provision for the various types of programs, together with information as to how an individual or an institution can obtain access to such funding, and so on. Many of the participants already know at least some of this information, but it is common to find their knowledge suddenly road-blocked: they may know that there is a formula which determines how many teachers are assigned to a school dictict and what that fomula is, but they do not know what the rationale behind that formula is, who created it, who reviews it, what relationship it bears to other parts of the 'system," or what



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affects its emendation or change. Practice is provided in removing those road-blocks by continually asking "Who?", "When?", "Why?", and refusing to be satisfied by the "It has been decided/agreed upon" kind of response, the one that usually conceals responsibility, and seeks to encourage the acceptance of the unsatisfactory status quo.

The course continues by identifying the major sources of information regarding advances in the ESL profession. Both theoretical and practical issues are examined--further relevant course work, conventions, journals, newsletters, commercially produces materials, networking systems, and so on. With regard to the latter, learning that even the "famous" within ESL make use of their colleagues can come as quite a shock to those who assume, for example, that articles always spring perfectly formed from the pen of a TESOL notable at first sitting. Indeed, the participants are not only surprised but also encouraged to learn of the cooperative effort that usually lies behind "scholarship." They realize that such endeavour and achievement need not be totally out of their own reach if they view all members of the profession as potential sources of information and help through their publications, presentations, and personal contact.

The next major section of the leadership component of the course outlines strategies for influencing people. With classroom teachers as the pivot, we look first at ways in which they can offer support and encouragement to other teachers and then, at how they can impress and persuade those to whom they themselves report. This up-as-well-as-down vision of the hierarchy, too, can be found surprising.

Leading a group of teachers requires that those teachers have confidence in the leader's intention and ability to listen to and facilitate their cause. This does not, of course, imply that "the cause" is necessarily right or reasonable from its outset; both ends and means often need considerable discussion. But such conversations have no chance of reaching a successful conclusion within a relationship of distrust. The onus is on the leader to earn that confidence.

The leader also needs to attend carefully to the "speech act" rather than to a literal interpretation of what is being said, in order to prevent mutual misunderstanding. For example:

--A teacher thinks through a problem, reaches a decision, and wishes confirmation of theat decision before taking action. He or she speaks to the "leader," who interprets the conversation as a request for a major reexamination of all the parameters of the problem. This misinterpretation results in an inappropriate response, which probably also detroys most of the confidence the teacher has in his/her own ability to think the thing through for him/herself.

--A teacher regularly provides the "leader" with detailed reports on work-related activities, on the assumption that the leader expects and requires such information; the leader interprets the volume of information as a signal of insecurity and a request for assistance in programming. In this case, the teacher goes on to increase the detail of the report in response to what he/she perceives as unnecessary concern on the part of the leader

regarding his/her performance.

--A teacher invites the leader to speak on an issue at a staff meeting, recognizing that the leader's presence would provide support to the case he/she wishes to be made and because the teacher can think of no other way to ensure the leader's presence other than as an invited speaker; the leader accepts, responding to the request in order to assist the teacher. A brief conversation between teacher-leader, however may well reveal that what the teacher really needs is some collaborative planning with the leader as to what should be said at the meeting, together with some encouragement from the leader that the teacher could and should play the major role in delivering the message, plus assurance that the leader would be present to demonstrate support for the teacher's position. Collectively, all three of these actions avoid undermining the credibility of the teacher's position, which is always a possible outcome when an outside "expert" takes over.

--A teacher calls a leader to ask advice regarding some small work-related detail, but quickly comes to the real reason for the call: a request for help on a more personal matter. The leader continues to discuss the work-related item because he/she feels inadequately prepared to help with the other, rather than acknowledging that fact and offering to put the individual in touch with somebody who may be able to assist more effectively.

In addition to being an attentive listener, the leader must also be "credible." He or she must establish a reputation as a knowledgeable spokesperson and negotiator for ESL with the people who make policy and budgetary decisions that affect ESL programs. He or she must therefore also be visible, prompt and willing to take on unpopular tasks such as organizing and chairing meetings, introducing and thanking speakers, preparing and making speeches, writing up minutes, drafting letters, preparing newsletter copy, and even (on occasion) planning and organizing conventions.

From this viewpoint, it is necessary that a "leader" make his/her presence known and go on record in documenting his/her position on a wide variety of issues with vigour and consistency. Consider, for example, the question of whether ESL teachers in elementary schools whose programs are organized on a "withdrawal" or "pull-out" basis, should be "the substitute" used to replace absent teachers in "regular" classrooms, with the resulting cancellation of the day's ESL class. A leader must know the legal terms of a teacher's contract--in some cases the penalty for noncompliance in such situations is dismissal--and having decided to comply, should have considered which behavior will produce better long-term results--a sullen, grudging compliance accompanied by muttered complaint, or a cheerful acceptance of the assigned duties, accompanied by a clear statement of the results of repeated class cancellations on the quality and status of the ESL program provision. Our own experience encourages us to maintain that it is no longer enough to win small battles on technicalities, or get requests granted merely to be rid of the suppliants. We need major

victories, with agreed peace treaties or large negotiated settlements with the terms acceptable to both sides, so that the same issues will not return again and again to haunt us.

Influence increases with the size of the audience one has access to. Most teachers have plenty of confidence in interacting with their students as individuals and en masse. They are also accustomed to discussing work-related matters with colleagues in pairs or small groups. This confidence, however, does not always extend to addressing larger groups of colleagues in more formal settings, and even less frequently to speaking before a crowd of strangers, into a radio microphone, or when faced with a TV camera.

In fact, the resulting panic can be so gripping that trying to ease the pain by preparing a workshop and presenting it to an audience may not be sufficient to comfort the most fearful. Taking the course described, however, requires that every candidate plan and give a 45-minute presentation to a group of about 35 colleagues, also enrolled in ESL inservice courses (not necessarilly this one), as part of a mini-confrence held toward the end of the course. To prepare for third event, there is considerable discussion of what makes a good workshop or presentation, again based on the teachers' own experiences as experienced lecture-goers, confrence attendees, and so on. And again, a collective ideal is created together with a set of criteria against which success may be measured. as in the following examples.

--The presenter demonstrates a firm grasp of the topic, presents it within an overall framework, identifies the crucial areas of concern, and highlights the most inportant factors.

--The presenter accurately gauges the level of awareness and interests of the audience and arranges content, method, and tone of presentation accordingly.

--The presenter organizes his/her material in a coherent, logical manner, displays evidence of preparation and uses whatever audiovisual or other aids are appropriate to the topic and to the workshop audience.

--The presenter encourages audience participation and reponds to audience feedback in a considerate manner, but discourages the monopolists or a general audience takeover.

Considerable discussion, too, is encouraged in areas such as topic selection, organzation of material, timing and use of increasing audience involvement, and to controlling at least the appearance of nervousness. The production of the mini-confernce program itself provides practice in creating an appealing title, in writing a succinct abstract, in specifying the intended audience, and in ensuring the provision of appropriate audiovisual equipment, right down to the seating arrangements and coffee (and though the the latter may be last, they are most certainly not the least).

Since it is presentation skills which are being honed, rather than the ability to demonstrate mastery of new material, topics typically tend to reflect the varied experiences of the candidates, their

strengths and preoccupations. Five examples give an idea of the range, and also the degree of showmanship.

--Let It All Hang Out--Teaching Idioms at the Secondary School Level.

A Little More Madeira, My Dear?--A Look at the Function of Persuasion for the Low Intermediate Adult Student.

Teaching ESL in Isolated Posts--Professional and Personal Challenges of Teaching on an Indian Reserve in Northern Ontario.

A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words--The Use of Still Photographs with Elementary Children.

"For Official Use Only"--What Do I Write There, Miss?--The Reading and Writing Skills Required by Secondary and Adult Level Students to Cope with Today's Form-Loving Bureaucracy.

The mini-conference concept has produced some excellent presentations. What is most satisfying, however, is the knowledge that many of the teachers have approached, and largely overcome, a psychological barrier which had them convinced that they could not sustain a presentation in front of, at the least challenging, a group of peers. For many, there was the discovery that not only were they successful, but that they actually enjoyed the experience; some, indeed, felt able to accept an invitation to repeat their performance at the next provincial, national, or even international TESOL Conference before a much larger audience. The written versions of some have, in consequence, been published. It takes little imagination to think what effect such recognition has on an individual, and on how he or she may be subsequently regarded at a variety of levels.

Despite their relatively high level of literacy, however, teachers, like many other well-educated professionals, are reluctant writers. An informal survey of candidates on the "Specialist" course regularly reveals that an average ESL teacher's daily writing activity is restricted to a cheque, a list, a telephone message or two, a couple of dittos, some blackboard instructions, and maybe once a week, a personal letter. There is general agreement that writing pieces of "extended prose"--more than one paragraph--is an activity to be avoided if at all possible. No one finds writing term papers, reports, formal letters, and the like easy; but surprisingly, most view this fact as a personal inadequacy, not one shared by their peers.

In terms of developing leadership skills, writing is certainly a powerful tool. This course cannot make those who take it into accomplished writers. It can, however, provide considerable information regarding the composing process; well-educated, native and fluent English-speaking adults suggest that writing persuasive, explanatory, and creative prose is not easy. Rather, it demands fierce concentration and revisions which are time-consuming and often frustrating. The results of having grappled with a writing task and produced a well-constructed piece can be sufficiently satisfying--both in terms of clarifying the writers own thoughts to him/herself and of

communicating these thoughts effectively to others--sufficiently satisfying as to be consoling, if not remunerative.

Writing and all the other topics touched upon in the leadership component are brought together in the final assignment, the socio-politcial essay. For this, candidates are required to choose a challenging situation with which they themselves are now faced. Each is asked to provide a statement of the problem, a summary of the major theoretical issues and/or backrground information necessary to understand the problem, and a step-by-step plan of action as to what might be done to solve it. The skills here involve demonstrating knowledge both of the field and of broader socio-political context of which ESL is part, indicating ability to influence and persuade individuals, (both peers and superiors), ability, and just as importantly, willingness to organize and lead group meetings, and the use of writing as a means of information dissemination and persuasion. Topics which have arisen from the assignment are even more wide-ranging that those chosen for the workshop. They include the following.

A Multi-racial, Multi-ethnic, Leadership Training Camp for Students and Its Aftermath.
Staffing and Programming for Declined ESL Enrollments.
Getting Parents Involved.
The Misplacement of English as a Second Dialect Students at the Secondary School.
Establishing an ESL/Literacy Program in a Mining Town in Northern Ontario.
A School's Response to Polish Refugees.

The whole course is based on the premise that the experienced candidates bring with them is both a possible and a necessary starting point for the development of leadership skills. Leadership is not something which someone else gives one (at least not initially and not now); first and foremost it has to be something one takes upon oneself. The place to begin, therefore, is not in some future setting, but right here and now, regardless of the situation, the other people involved, their personal and power relationships, and the prevailing climate of economic restraint.

Though this leadership component is limited in scope (it shares the 125 hours of class time with major sections on teaching other skills, such as listening comprehension, writing, testing), it is currently an established part of this course and one which, by the nature of the topics it raises and the approach it employs, asks teachers to engage in personal questioning about the extent to which they are prepared to learn and then put to use the skills involved in assuming a leadership role. It also pointed out that the stakes are high if they, as individuals, choose to do nothing. We make no claim that the ideas expressed in this presentation are novel; business and industry have practiced most of them for well over a decade. Within ESL training courses, however, the topics and strategies outlined here are, perhaps, not usual and commonplace; but they must surely be required to continue the training of an individual, especially with regard to his or her contribution to the development of the profession, and to his or her own professional development.

Conclusion

This kind of course can and does give teachers the courage and the skills they need to bring out positive changes in their own work settings and, sometimes, in those of their colleagues. The cummulative effort of many hundreds of ESL techers adopting a proactive, assertive, politically aware stance toward achieving a shared goal--that of establishing a firm institutional base of ESL programs with strong public and governmental support--is a must for the '80's as far as I'm concerned.

As I move into my term as First Vice President of TESOL, I am acutely aware that it is only this broadly-based, concerted effort that will get us what we want for ourselves and for our students.

I didn't stand for election in this organization to be able to answer the question, "Who's in charge here?" with and "I am!" I want us all to answer that question, in whatever circumstaces we are asked it, with a polite but firm, "We are!!"

Note: The several versions of the course described in this presentation have taken place under the auspices of the Uinversity of Toronto and York University during the last four years. We would like to thank the many teachers involved for their creative response to the hurdles placed before them.